

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) ~~Superabsorbent~~ A
superabsorbent foam comprising at least one of (a) a
superabsorbent synthetic fiber ~~and/or~~ and (b) a natural
fiber selected from the group consisting of apple
fiber, orange fiber, tomato fiber, wheat fiber ~~and/or~~ ,
oat fiber, and mixtures thereof .

2. (Currently amended) ~~Superabsorbent~~ The
superabsorbent foam ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 1, obtain-
able by foaming a polymerizable aqueous mixture com-
prising at least a 50 mol% neutralized acid-functional
monoethylenically unsaturated monomer or at least one
basic polymer, a crosslinker, a superabsorbent fiber,
and at least one surfactant, and subsequently polymer-
izing and/or crosslinking the foamed mixture.

3. (Currently amended) ~~Superabsorbent~~ The
superabsorbent foam ~~as claimed in~~ of claim ~~1 or 2,~~
~~wherefor~~ wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture
contains from 0.01 to 10% by weight of superabsorbent
fiber, based on the monomer.

4. (Currently amended) ~~Superabsorbent~~ The
superabsorbent foam ~~as claimed in any of~~ of ~~claims 1 to 3,~~
claim 2 ~~wherefor~~ wherein the polymerizable aqueous
mixture contains from 0.1 to 5% by weight of the
superabsorbent fiber, based on the monomer.

5. (Currently amended) ~~Superabsorbent~~ The superabsorbent foam as claimed in any of claims claim 1 to 4, having been wherein the foam is surface post-crosslinked.

6. (Currently amended) ~~Superabsorbent~~ The superabsorbent foam as claimed in any of claims 1 to 5, claim 2 wherefor wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture comprises at least a 50% aqueous sodium or potassium hydroxide solution neutralized acrylic acid, a crosslinker containing at least two ethylenically unsaturated double bonds, a radical-forming initiator, a superabsorbent fiber composed of comprising a hydrolyzed and subsequently crosslinked copolymer of isobutene and maleic anhydride, and at least one surfactant.

7. (Currently amended) ~~Superabsorbent~~ The superabsorbent foam as claimed in any of claims 1 to 5, claim 2 wherefor wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture comprises at least one basic polymer selected from the group consisting of polymers containing vinylamine units, polymers containing vinylguanidine units, polymers containing dialkylaminoalkyl(meth)acrylamide units, polyethyleneimines, ethyleneimine-grafted polyamidoamines, and polydiallyldimethylammonium chlorides.

8. (Currently amended) A process for producing a superabsorbent foam having improved wet strength, which comprises foaming a crosslinkable aqueous mixture comprising at least a 50 mol% neutralized acid-functional monoethylenically unsaturated monomer or at least one basic polymer, a crosslinker, at least one of (a) a superabsorbent synthetic fiber and/or and (b) a natural fiber selected from the group consisting of apple fiber, orange fiber, tomato fiber, wheat fiber and/or, and mixtures thereof, and at least one surfactant, and subsequently polymerizing the monomer in the foamed mixture or crosslinking the basic polymer in the foamed mixture to form a hydrogel foam.

9. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The process ~~as~~ ~~elaimed in~~ of claim 8, wherein the aqueous mixture comprises from 0.01 to 10% by weight and ~~preferably~~ ~~from 0.1 to 5%~~ by weight of the superabsorbent fiber.

10. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The process ~~as~~ ~~elaimed in~~ of claim 8 ~~or 9,~~ wherein the foaming of the aqueous polymerizable mixture is effected by dissolving ~~a radical inert gas~~ an inert gas in the mixture at from 2 to 400 bar and subsequently decompressing the mixture to atmospheric.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (New) The process of claim 8 wherein the aqueous mixtures comprise from 0.1 to 5% by weight of the superabsorbent fiber.

13. (New) An article comprising the super-absorbent foam of claim 1.

14. (New) The article of claim 13 selected from the group consisting of a hygiene article to absorb body fluids, a dressing article to cover wounds, and a ventilation system filter.

15. (New) A method of dewatering a liquid comprising contacting the liquid with a superabsorbent foam of claim 1.

16. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein the liquid is a sludge or a water-containing oil or hydrocarbon.

17. (New) A sealing or packaging material comprising a superabsorbent foam of claim 1.

18. (New) A soil adjuvant comprising a superabsorbent foam of claim 1.

19. (New) A method of thickening an aqueous liquid to facilitate disposal thereof, comprising admixing the aqueous liquid with a superabsorbent foam of claim 1 to thicken the aqueous liquid.